

1 **CLAIMS**

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3 1. A method comprising:

4 receiving an indication of a collaborative electronic mail message that

5 includes a portion for feedback from one or more recipients;

6 displaying an identifier of the collaborative electronic mail message for

7 viewing by a user, and

8 accepting commands, made available by an electronic mail program for

9 manipulating other electronic mail messages, to manipulate the collaborative

10 electronic mail message.

11

12 2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the commands to manipulate

13 the collaborative electronic mail message include a reply command.

14

15 3. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the commands to manipulate

16 the collaborative electronic mail message include a forward command.

17

18 4. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the commands to manipulate

19 the collaborative electronic mail message include a delete command.

20

21 5. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the commands to manipulate

22 the collaborative electronic mail message include a flag for follow-up command.

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1 **6.** A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the indication comprises the
2 collaborative electronic mail message.

3
4 **7.** A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the identifier includes a
5 subject of the collaborative electronic mail message and an author of the
6 collaborative electronic mail message.

7
8 **8.** A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the identifier includes a size
9 of the collaborative electronic mail message, including all of the content of the
10 collaborative electronic mail message.

11
12 **9.** A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the collaborative electronic
13 mail message further includes a graph of responses to the collaborative electronic
14 mail message.

15
16 **10.** A method as recited in claim 9, further comprising:
17 receiving a user selection of a portion of the graph; and
18 indicating which of a plurality of comments in the portion for feedback
19 correspond to the selected portion of the graph.

20
21 **11.** A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the user selection
22 comprises positioning of a cursor over the portion of the graph.

1 **12.** A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the portion of the graph
2 comprises a bar of a bar graph.

3
4 **13.** A method as recited in claim 9, further comprising:
5 receiving a user selection of a portion of the graph; and
6 indicating which of the one or more recipients corresponds to the portion of
7 the graph.

8
9 **14.** A method as recited in claim 13, wherein a recipient corresponds to
10 the portion of the graph if the recipient's response to the collaborative electronic
11 mail message is reflected in the portion.

12
13 **15.** A method as recited in claim 13, wherein indicating which of the
14 one or more recipients corresponds to the portion of the graph comprises
15 displaying which of the one or more recipients corresponds to the portion in a box
16 separate from the collaborative electronic mail message.

17
18 **16.** A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
19 comparing a time identified in the collaborative electronic mail message
20 with an electronic calendar corresponding to the user;
21 determining whether a conflict exists between the time identified in the
22 collaborative electronic mail message and a pre-existing commitment in the
23 electronic calendar; and
24 if a conflict exists, then displaying an indication of the conflict.
25

1 **17.** A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
2 comparing a time identified in the collaborative electronic mail message
3 with an electronic task list corresponding to the user;
4 determining whether a conflict exists between the time identified in the
5 collaborative electronic mail message and a pre-existing task in the electronic task
6 list; and
7 if a conflict exists, then displaying an indication of the conflict.

8
9 **18.** A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
10 changing the identifier when the collaborative electronic mail message is
11 opened by the user;
12 receiving an indication that the collaborative electronic mail message has
13 been modified; and
14 changing the identifier again to visually indicate that the collaborative
15 electronic mail message has been modified.

16
17 **19.** A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
18 waiting until an opportune time to display the identifier.

19
20 **20.** A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
21 including, in the identifier, an indication of an author of the collaborative
22 electronic mail message.
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1 **21.** One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer
2 program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim
3 1.

4
5 **22.** A system comprising:
6 a calendar component that maintains a record of appointments scheduled
7 for a user; and
8 an electronic mail component, communicatively coupled to the calendar
9 component, that presents both collaborative electronic mail messages and other
10 electronic mail messages to a user, and that also identifies conflicts between
11 appointments identified in the collaborative electronic mail messages and the
12 appointments scheduled for the user.

13
14 **23.** A system as recited in claim 22, wherein the collaborative electronic
15 mail messages include a new collaborative electronic mail message being authored
16 at the system.

17
18 **24.** A system as recited in claim 22, wherein the collaborative electronic
19 mail messages include a collaborative electronic mail message received from
20 another system.

21
22 **25.** A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising:
23 a task manager component, communicatively coupled to the electronic mail
24 component, that maintains an electronic task list; and
25

1 wherein the electronic mail component further identifies conflicts between
2 appointments identified in the collaborative electronic mail message and tasks in
3 the electronic task list.

4
5 **26.** A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising:
6 a contact manager component, communicatively coupled to the electronic
7 mail component, that maintains a set of electronic mail addresses; and

8 wherein the electronic mail component further accesses the set of electronic
9 mail addresses to identify electronic mail addresses of recipients identified by the
10 user.

11
12 **27.** One or more computer-readable media having stored thereon a
13 plurality of instructions that, when executed by one or more processors of a
14 computer, cause the one or more processors to perform acts including:

15 displaying a plurality of user-selectable options for control of electronic
16 mail messages;

17 allowing the plurality of user-selectable options to also control
18 collaborative electronic mail messages.

19
20 **28.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
21 wherein the plurality of user-selectable options includes a message reply option.

22
23 **29.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
24 wherein the plurality of user-selectable options includes a message forward option.

1 **30.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
2 wherein the plurality of user-selectable options includes a create new message
3 option.

4
5 **31.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
6 wherein the plurality of instructions further cause the one or more processors to
7 perform acts including accessing, during creation of a new collaborative electronic
8 mail message, an electronic contact list to identify an electronic mail address for a
9 recipient of the collaborative electronic mail message.

10
11 **32.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
12 wherein the plurality of instructions further cause the one or more processors to
13 perform acts including:

14 displaying a user-selectable reminder option; and

15 sending, in response to selection of the reminder option, a reminder of a
16 previously sent collaborative electronic mail message to one or more recipients of
17 the previously sent collaborative electronic mail message.

18
19 **33.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
20 wherein the plurality of instructions further cause the one or more processors to
21 perform acts including:

22 displaying a user-selectable summary option; and

23 in response to selection of the summary option, sending a summary, to one
24 or more recipients of the previously sent collaborative electronic mail message, of
25 responses received to a previously sent collaborative electronic mail message.

1
2 **34.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
3 wherein the plurality of instructions further cause the one or more processors to
4 perform acts including:

5 accessing an electronic calendar maintained by a task manager component;

6 and

7 identifying conflicts between times included in the collaborative electronic
8 mail messages and commitments in the electronic calendar.

9
10 **35.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in 34, wherein the
11 identifying comprises identifying conflicts between commitments in the electronic
12 calendar and collaborative electronic mail messages being authored at the
13 computer as well as collaborative electronic mail messages received at the
14 computer.

15
16 **36.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 27,
17 wherein the plurality of instructions further cause the one or more processors to
18 perform acts including:

19 identifying, to an author of a collaborative electronic mail message at the
20 computer, how many recipients have not yet opened the collaborative electronic
21 mail message; and

22 identifying, to the author, how many recipients have responded to the
23 collaborative electronic mail message.

1 **37.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 36, further
2 comprising identifying, to the author, how many recipients have opened but not
3 responded to the collaborative electronic mail message.

4
5 **38.** A method comprising:
6 displaying, in an electronic mailbox, an identifier of a collaborative
7 electronic mail message;
8 changing the identifier when the collaborative electronic mail message is
9 opened by a user;
10 receiving an indication that the collaborative electronic mail message has
11 been modified; and
12 changing the identifier again to visually indicate that the collaborative
13 electronic mail message has been modified.

14
15 **39.** A method as recited in claim 38, wherein the identifier includes a
16 subject of the collaborative electronic mail message and an author of the
17 collaborative electronic mail message.

18
19 **40.** A method as recited in claim 38, wherein changing the identifier
20 when the collaborative electronic mail message is opened by a user comprises
21 changing the identifier from a boldface format to a non-boldface format.

22
23 **41.** A method as recited in claim 38, wherein changing the identifier
24 again comprises changing the identifier to a boldface format.
25

1 **42.** One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer
2 program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim
3 38.

4
5 **43.** One or more computer-readable media having stored thereon a
6 plurality of instructions that, when executed by one or more processors of a
7 computer, causes the one or more processors to perform acts including:

8 displaying, in an electronic mailbox, a single identifier corresponding to a
9 collaborative electronic mail message regardless of a number of replies to the
10 collaborative electronic mail message that are received.

11
12 **44.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 43,
13 wherein the single identifier includes one or more of: a collaborative electronic
14 mail message icon, an author, a subject, and a timestamp.

15
16 **45.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 43,
17 wherein the plurality of instructions further cause the one or more processors to
18 perform acts including:

19 changing how the single identifier is displayed based at least in part on
20 whether the collaborative electronic mail message has been opened and whether a
21 modification to the collaborative electronic mail message has been received since
22 opening the collaborative electronic mail message.

1 **46.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 45,
2 wherein the changing comprises displaying the single identifier in a boldface style
3 if the collaborative electronic mail message has not been opened or if a
4 modification to the collaborative electronic mail message has been received since
5 the collaborative electronic mail message was last opened, and otherwise
6 displaying the single identifier in a non-boldface style.

7
8 **47.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 43,
9 wherein the plurality of instructions further cause the one or more processors to
10 perform acts including:

11 accepting commands, made available by an electronic mail program for
12 manipulating other electronic mail messages, to manipulate the collaborative
13 electronic mail message.

14
15 **48.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 47,
16 wherein the commands include one or more of: forwarding a message, replying to
17 a message, and deleting a message.

18
19 **49.** A method comprising:
20 receiving an indication that a collaborative electronic mail message has
21 been modified; and

22 waiting until an opportune time to display a notification that the
23 collaborative electronic mail message has been modified.

1 **50.** A method as recited in claim 49, further comprising determining the
2 opportune time to display the notification based at least in part on the importance
3 of a topic of the collaborative electronic mail message to a user that is to receive
4 the notification.

5
6 **51.** A method as recited in claim 49, further comprising determining the
7 opportune time to display the notification based at least in part on the identity of
8 the author of the collaborative electronic mail message.

9
10 **52.** A method as recited in claim 49, further comprising determining the
11 opportune time to display the notification based at least in part on the identity of a
12 recipient that modified the collaborative electronic mail message.

13
14 **53.** A method as recited in claim 49, further comprising determining the
15 opportune time to display the notification based at least in part on what a user that
16 is to receive the notification is working on.

17
18 **54.** A method as recited in claim 49, further comprising determining the
19 opportune time to display the notification based at least in part on how busy a user
20 that is to receive the notification is.

21
22 **55.** A method as recited in claim 49, further comprising:
23 receiving an indication of a new collaborative electronic mail message;
24 waiting until an opportune time to display a notification of the new
25 collaborative electronic mail message.

1
2 **56.** A method as recited in claim 49, wherein the notification comprises
3 an identifier of the collaborative electronic mail message.
4

5 **57.** A method as recited in claim 56, wherein the identifier of the
6 collaborative electronic mail message includes both an indication of a subject of
7 the collaborative electronic mail message and an indication of an author of the
8 collaborative electronic mail message.
9

10 **58.** One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer
11 program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim
12 49.
13

14 **59.** One or more computer-readable media having stored thereon a
15 plurality of instructions that, when executed by one or more processors of a
16 computer, causes the one or more processors to perform acts including:

17 receiving an indication of a message that includes a reply to a collaborative
18 electronic mail message; and

19 determining when a notification of the reply should be displayed.
20

21 **60.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 59,
22 wherein the determining comprises determining when the notification should be
23 displayed based at least in part on the importance of a topic of the collaborative
24 electronic mail message to a user that is to receive the notification.
25

1 **61.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 59,
2 wherein the determining comprises determining when the notification should be
3 displayed based at least in part on the identity of the author of the collaborative
4 electronic mail message.

5
6 **62.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 59,
7 wherein the determining comprises determining when the notification should be
8 displayed based at least in part on the identity of a recipient that modified the
9 collaborative electronic mail message.

10
11 **63.** One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 59,
12 wherein the determining comprises determining when the notification should be
13 displayed based at least in part on what a user that is to receive the notification is
14 working on.

15
16 **64.** A method comprising:
17 receiving an indication of a collaborative electronic mail message; and
18 displaying a notification of the collaborative electronic mail message, the
19 notification identifying an author of the collaborative electronic mail message as a
20 source of the collaborative electronic mail message.

21
22 **65.** A method as recited in claim 64, wherein the collaborative
23 electronic mail message is a new collaborative electronic mail message.
24
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1 **66.** A method as recited in claim 64, wherein the collaborative
2 electronic mail message is a reply to a previously created collaborative electronic
3 mail message.

4
5 **67.** A method as recited in claim 64, further comprising displaying, as
6 the notification, a subject of the collaborative electronic mail message and a size
7 of the collaborative electronic mail message, wherein the size of the collaborative
8 electronic mail message includes all of the content of the collaborative electronic
9 mail message.

10
11 **68.** A method as recited in claim 64, wherein the indication comprises
12 an identifier of the author, a subject of the collaborative electronic mail message
13 and a size of the collaborative electronic mail message, wherein the size of the
14 collaborative electronic mail message includes all of the content of the
15 collaborative electronic mail message.

16
17 **69.** A method as recited in claim 64, wherein the indicator comprises the
18 collaborative electronic mail message.

19
20 **70.** One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer
21 program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim
22 64.

1 71. A method comprising:
2 identifying, to an author of a collaborative electronic mail message, how
3 many recipients have not yet opened the collaborative electronic mail message;
4 and
5 identifying, to the author, how many recipients have responded to the
6 collaborative electronic mail message.

7
8 72. A method as recited in claim 71, further comprising identifying, to
9 the author, how many recipients have opened but not responded to the
10 collaborative electronic mail message.

11
12 73. A method as recited in claim 71, further comprising including both
13 the indication of how many recipients have not yet opened the collaborative
14 electronic mail message and the indication of how many recipients have responded
15 to the collaborative electronic mail message in a single dialog box of a user
16 interface.

17
18 74. A method as recited in claim 71, further comprising including both
19 the indication of how many recipients have not yet opened the collaborative
20 electronic mail message and the indication of how many recipients have responded
21 to the collaborative electronic mail message in a single button of a user interface.
22
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24
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1 **75.** A method as recited in claim 71, wherein the identifying how many
2 recipients have not yet opened the collaborative electronic mail message
3 comprises displaying a first icon to represent a recipient that has not yet opened
4 the collaborative electronic mail message, and wherein the identifying how many
5 recipients have responded to the collaborative electronic mail message comprises
6 displaying a second icon to represent a recipient that has responded to the
7 collaborative electronic mail messages.

8
9 **76.** One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer
10 program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim
11 71.